

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES
July 9, 2009

Members Present: Daniel Clapp, Doris Holden, Joan Golowich, Joel Gordon, Rosemary Kofler, Kathy Koplow, Mary Jane Laus, Barbara Sutherland, Juana Trujillo

Absent: Karen Erman

Select Board Liaison: Gerry Weiss

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Giovanna Mix (Administrative Assistant for Programs)

Guests: Susan Whitbourne, President of the Friends of the Amherst Senior Center
Shirley Lauder, Norma Packard, Barbara Slovin, Wendy Iseman (members of the Friends), Richard Kofler

Welcome:

Dan Clapp, Co-Chair, called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 9:04 AM. He invited public comment. There was none.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

The minutes of the June 4, 2009 meeting were approved and accepted.

Friends of Amherst Senior Center Treasurer's Report:

Doris provided a handout. There is \$17,761.74 in the checking account and \$60,025.29 in the investment account. Money raised by the Friends since its inception in October, 2007 is about \$20,000. The Treasurer's Report was approved and accepted.

NEW BUSINESS

FRIENDS UPDATE:

Nancy introduced members of the Friends. The COA wants to enhance communication with the Friends, thus we begin with a report from them after their first full year in operation.

Susan Whitbourne reported. There is overlap in membership and two COA members are joint members of the Friends which is helpful in providing a mechanism for joint communication. Susan wanted to discuss today an issue over several requests for funding. The Friends have agreed unanimously to most funding requests over the year. However, there was a couple in which there was some discussion about the funding proposal. In particular the most recent request to fund a survey, which Susan said would involve almost all of the money that has been raised over the year. The Friends did not know about the request until one week before the money was needed, giving them no time to deliberate and address any questions they might have. They were presented in short order with a request that was imminent. The Friends need to be able to have a chance to work with the COA to figure out the best way to approach a funding request. Had the Friends known about the survey request in the fall they could have worked with us to raise the funds and included that as a focus in their spring fund raising efforts. The survey request did not proceed in as positive a way as it could have because of lack of communication.

Another issue that has come up a number of times is a previous fund raising effort that was held for the 40th Anniversary. It was predicated on the notion that there would be a brochure produced describing the history of the Senior Center, etc. The brochure would include the names of the donors. The brochure is not yet completed and now the Friends must go back to many of the same contributors requesting more money.

The Friends is planning a Variety Show in the spring with Donna Lee.

One issue for the Friends is "What is our role?" They were incorporated with the mission to raise funds to support the programs of the COA. How do we deal with funding requests that are more than trivial?

Nancy provided several handouts to clarify the role of the COA and the role of the Friends.

"Articles of Organization" for the Friends states that the purpose is: to raise funds for the purpose of purchasing and donating to the Amherst Senior Center any and all items of equipment, furniture, and other tangible property deemed desirable for the furtherance of their activities; to assist in the funding of programs and activities to be conducted/sponsored by the Amherst Senior Center.

The COA Bylaws states that the purpose of the COA is: to identify and advocate for the needs of the aging population; to recommend and evaluate programs and services to meet these needs.

Nancy said the COA requests for money are very well thought out. In this case, the survey committee was comprised of members of the COA in consultation with the Director of the Chicopee Senior Center and some folks who have expertise in research. The Ad Hoc committee deliberated about one year. The COA did not anticipate that the Friends would have as many questions as they did. That issue was a learning experience for all of us. Consequently, we have put a mechanism in place to more formally assure that everyone is on the same page. Susan pointed out that the potential for information sharing had already been in place. It just didn't happen.

Dan pointed out the need to focus on the importance of communication and cooperation. Hereafter, each COA meeting will have a report from the Friends and visa versa.

Nancy and members of the COA acknowledged that it was remiss in not earlier informing the Friends of the need to fund the survey.

Nancy reminded us that she has looked to other sources to help fund the survey. She also noted that the Town Manager informed her that members of the COA could also fund-raise. Money can go to the Friends or directly to the Amherst Senior Center. Either way it is tax deductible. The COA and Friends would have to coordinate fund-raising efforts so as to not overlap.

Nancy emphasized that the Friends' role regarding the survey is **not** to be involved with the survey process itself, such as dealing with the researcher and how he goes about his work. That is the role of the COA.

Dan added that it would be appropriate for any individuals to ask questions of the Ad Hoc committee, not of the researcher. The Ad Hoc committee has been working with the researcher all along and has established lines of communication.

Wendy suggested we now move forward and look at the bigger picture of "What is the responsibility of the Friends?" and "What is the responsibility of the COA?" The Friends is there to raise money. Do they also have the right to say where it should go?

Nancy cited an example. If the COA requested money for a car, it would be up to the Friends to decide if they were willing to give that money or fund-raise for that. However, it would not be up to the Friends to decide where the car is going, how it is used or who drives it. Similarly, it is up to the Friends to decide if they will fund the survey, but not to enter into the details or determine how the survey is operated, what is in the survey, or what questions are asked.

Shirley Lauder restated the purpose of the Friends – to raise money to support the programs of the COA.

Barbara Slovin said clarification is necessary for the Friends. Do we just hand out the money without any thought behind it? If we have expertise about the proposal can we speak up?

Wendy noted that the COA has the best interests of the Senior Center at heart. It spends a lot of time discussing what the needs of the Center are. It doesn't make sense that the Friends make decisions about where the money goes. It is a fund raising arm. We raise money for the things that the COA thinks long and hard about. They decide where the money should go.

Susan reminded us that the Friends need to tell donors in advance what they are fund-raising for.

BUDGET UPDATE:

Gerry suggested we look at other models in Town with regards to funding decisions.

He then updated the COA on the budget.

The Governor signed the local option meals tax for an additional 0.75%. It would bring about \$350,000 to the Town. The Legislature passed a 2% increase in the occupancy tax, increasing it to 6%. Stan Rosenberg submitted an amendment that the Campus Center Hotel must also charge a room tax. That may be worth about \$180,000 to Town.

The bad news is there will likely be mid-year budget cuts, probably in September.

Non-union employees voted for managers to take a 2% COLA and others to take a 3.5% COLA. The Town Manager will take zero. Teachers will stick to 3.5% COLA, administrators will take 2%. Consequently, we have lost Giovanna's position, eleven positions in Town and fifty positions in the schools.

Nancy and the COA thanked Gerry for his ongoing support of the Senior Center.

Operational Adjustments Due to Budget Cuts:

Nancy: The Center will revert to closing at 4:00 PM (from 5 PM). Giovanna has been a huge help and although she will continue to volunteer, much of her work will become the responsibility of Nancy and Maura. They already struggle to keep up with the work. Closing at 4 PM will give them more uninterrupted time to do their work. They will also limit the hours they sell van tickets and make room reservations – from 9 AM to 3 PM with an hour out for lunch. An announcement of the new hours will be made in the August newsletter.

Maura has always had an open door policy and seen people whenever they walk in. She will probably now begin to require scheduled appointments from 10-12 PM and 1-3 PM.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Ad Hoc Survey Committee:

Joel reported. A Senior Center survey has been conducted every decade since 1970. The 2010 survey is particularly important. It will more extensive and professional than previous surveys. Last spring the COA appointed an Ad Hoc committee, which began work in May 2008. In May 2009 they received a formal proposal from the UMass Social and Demographic Research Institute (SADRI). The COA passed two motions in June 2009.

1) To support enthusiastically the SADRI proposal. 2) To request funding for the survey from the Friends. The Friends approved the amount of \$5000 toward funding of the survey. The SADRI contract for \$8500 was signed on June 29, 2009. An additional \$3500 will come from a Gift Account to supplement the funding.

The Ad Hoc committee was very pleased with the first draft of the survey questionnaire that was sent by Dr. Randall Stokes. The Institutional Review Board is in the process of approving the document. The rough schedule is:

- To send 1100 postcards in early August alerting randomly selected recipients age 50 and older about the survey.
- An article about the survey will appear in the August *Senior Spirit* and in the Gazette and/or Bulletin.
- Recipients of the postcards can respond by email or on paper via mail.
- If postcards recipients do not respond, a follow up phone call will be made. A report will be ready in the late fall.

Parade Plans for September 27th:

Nancy needs to send a list of COA members who will be participating in the parade by mid-July. Rules for the parade are posted on the Town website.

Stay Put:

Nancy reported. It has been more than six months since we submitted liability questions to Town Council. We still have no response despite repeated requests. Recently Stay Put members met and have reluctantly reconsidered their offer to assist Maura in matching services with elders. As time has gone by, they have reconsidered the time commitment for the project and their own limitations.

Stay Put had donated \$600 to the Senior Center checking account in anticipation of the work they would do. The money will be returned to the donors or be given to the Friends.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Membership Update and Election of Officers:

Rosemary reported that Mary Jane Laus has been approved by Town Manager and has been sworn in. She is now an official member of the COA. The slate of officers is:

Chair – Dan Clapp

Vice Chair – Joan Golowich

Secretary – Rosemary

There were no further nominations.

Doris made a motion that the Secretary cast one ballot for the slate. It was seconded and passed unanimously.

Highland Valley Elder Services:

Barbara reported. At the last meeting Robert Gallant and John Lutz reported on the grants given out for the past year.

STAFF REPORTS

Staffing Changes:

Nancy introduced Wendy Iseman. It is hoped she will become a Senior Aide employee and work for us 20 hours a week. In the meantime she is volunteering and helping Nancy and Maura. She has expertise in grant writing, fund raising and is capable in many areas.

Wendy stated her background. She was a Social Worker in NYC for 27 years. She did health education for the American Lung Association for 21 years and did training in a school-based program. She was a Development Director for a program for handicapped skiing in Maine. She has written small grants and has a lot of experience with running publicity and fund-raising events.

Understanding Senior Center Gift Accounts:

Nancy provided a handout of SC accounts in the Town fund.

Budget money from taxation. Most of the money goes toward salaries. We have \$1000 budgeted for office supplies and \$360 for MCOA membership, nothing for center activities. Office supplies usually cost several thousand dollars and the real cost for activities to run the SC is between \$7000 and \$9000.

Gift Accounts:

1. COA Gift Account has \$1176. This is money given to the Senior Center from small donations for use of AV equipment and space by outside groups.
2. Senior Health Services - \$20,762. \$10,000 comes from the annual donation from the Gavins to pay for the nurse. The remainder is from two grants.
3. Florence Savings Bank Van Ticket Subsidy Money - \$229. For twenty years the SC/COA ran a free van service for elders. Rules and mandates changed and in 1996 the COA decided to not rebid the contract and it was awarded to Hulmes Transportation of Belchertown. When a fee for service policy was instituted a few years ago by PVRTA, many riders expressed that the fee would be a hardship. The Florence Savings Bank donated \$5000 to help cover the cost of van tickets for Amherst's most needy elders.

4. COA Van Maintenance - \$1226. This money is used for the twenty-passenger bus to pay for the driver, gas, inspection and maintenance.
5. Senior Program Account - \$6952. Someone gave \$9000 years ago for a project that was never carried out. The money remained to be used as needed. We spent \$2400 last fall out of this account for the *My Senior Center* program. \$3500 will be used to fund the 2010 survey.
6. Wellness Grant - \$694. This is Friends money used for low income elders for foot care and ear irrigation.
7. Public Access Defibrillator - \$3117. Money that Town employees raised to purchase a defibrillator for the Bangs Center and Town Hall and to pay for employees who volunteer to take the training.
8. Amherst College Emergency - \$7990. This is the remainder of the \$10,000 donated by Amherst College. Maura uses the money to help low income seniors with fuel assistance and other emergency needs.

The COA adjourned at 10:43 AM.

The next meeting of the COA will be held on September 17, 2009 at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary

The approved minutes of the June 4, 2009 meeting were delivered to the Select Board Office to be filed.